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ABSTRACT

This handbook describes an approach and provides guidelines for establishing a school-based inservice education program. The program is based on a single, local school staff that determines its own needs for professional development and uses its strengths and talents to meet those needs. Four basic phases for establishing a school-based program are discussed: 1) cooperative planning on the part of the staff; 2) staff assessment of needs; 3) training sessions and workshops; and, 4) evaluation of the program. (JD)

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SCHOOL-BASED INSERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

A Handbook for Planning & Providing

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TEXAS TEACHER CORPS NETWORK
TRAINING MATERIAL

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INTRODUCTION

What is this handbook about?

It's one of *those* days again. The kids aren't at school today, but you are. It's an inservice day for the teachers. Some of your colleagues are headed for the district-wide workshop on language arts materials, while you perhaps will be attending a seminar at the university on teaching geography to elementary students. Perhaps you feel slightly dissatisfied; or the inservice workshops you have attended in the past either did not suit your particular needs or were difficult to apply once you got back to your classroom. In other words, you feel pretty powerless about the whole idea of inservice education and the way it's implemented in your school.

Incidents and feelings like this are played and replayed throughout the school year all over the country. Given the importance of meaningful professional development for those involved in the education of children, the current situation appears to be rather inadequate. But what can be done about it?

This handbook describes an approach and provides guidance for establishing a school-based inservice education program—one which is based on a single, local school staff's ability to (1) determine its own needs for professional development and (2) utilize its strengths and talents to meet those needs. In the following pages, we explain four basic phases for establishing a school-based program for professional development for an elementary school faculty:

Phase I: Getting Ready

Phase II: Assessing Needs

Phase III: Training Sessions

Phase IV: Evaluating

This handbook also will include sections on training special area teachers and training teacher aides. Both groups will follow the same steps as the teachers but with some important variations.

The phases explained above are necessary for any effective school inservice program. An individual staff may

enter at whatever phase is appropriate to it. The length of phases will vary from campus to campus, but a phase should not be skipped without serious consideration. One exception to this is Phase I, which may be eliminated (although we think it is important and worthwhile in the long run).

After the first year of operation, most school faculties will want to recycle the process, eliminating Phase I and starting again at Phase II—the Needs Assessment.

PHASE I
GETTING READY

The principal begins the process of establishing an inservice program by selecting a steering committee which will oversee and guide all of the plannijg and operations of inservice activity in the school. The steering committee should be composed of teachers representing each grade level or subject area. Teacher aides and a P.T.A. representative can be included if desired. The composition of the committee may be flexible to meet changing needs. The steering committee serves as an advisory group throughout the process of planning and implementing the entire inservice program.

The steering committee can choose a variety of ways to explore what is inservice education. What follows is an example of how one such steering committee chose two workshop formats to explore the concept of school-based inservice education: (1) *Brainstorming specific questions* and (2) *Testing specific assumptions.*

Format One: The "Brainstorming" Workshop

Figure 1 gives a "flow chart" of the workshop's activities. First, the entire faculty can meet in the cafeteria for a general introduction of the afternoon's activities. By numbering off (in pairs), the teachers are divided into two discussion groups. These groups go to separate large classroom areas where they are introduced to their small group leaders (members of the steering committee) and re-divided into groups of about four teachers each, plus a leader. These small groups meet in various parts of the classroom areas and are presented with the following activities and questions:

Question 1: What is inservice education? Each individual in the group will write his own definition, share it with the group, and then a group statement will be generated. This statement should be brief; one or two sentences should suffice.

Question 2: Why have inservice education? This should be addressed, as should the following questions, according to

how inservice education operates *now* versus how it *ought* to be operated.

Question 3: Who should plan inservice education?

Question 4: Who should provide inservice education?

Question 5: How should content area of inservice education be selected and what content areas should be included? (focus on the role of the teacher) Key issues include the distinction between central administration control and local school control. Also, is content decided on the basis of individual teacher needs or current educational fads? This last point should touch off a discussion of the role of the teacher and skills necessary for effective teaching. Additionally, in establishing the content of training, it must be decided how to distinguish an area of interest from an area of actual need.

A couple of points need to be made about these small group meetings:

—The group leaders must have had a chance to "dry run" the process beforehand. Have the principal, committee chairperson, or someone else lead all of the small group leaders through the discussion activities/questions before the workshop to ensure that every group will be getting approximately the same treatment.

—At the beginning of the small group meetings a recorder should be appointed to be responsible for writing down the group's various responses.

—Finally, *everyone* participates in the discussions. The success of the "teaming" will depend on how much the individual faculty members feel a part of the team. That can't be discovered unless they contribute their ideas during the small group discussions.

After the small groups finish, the recorders meet and designate one person to report the compiled results of the small group meetings to the larger group while the teachers take a break. Such "maintenance" is important in keeping workshop participants from losing interest in the activities.

After the break, the small groups reconvene as a total group to look at the compiled responses to the discussion questions. Once again, the point of having several levels of sharing is to assure that common point of view.

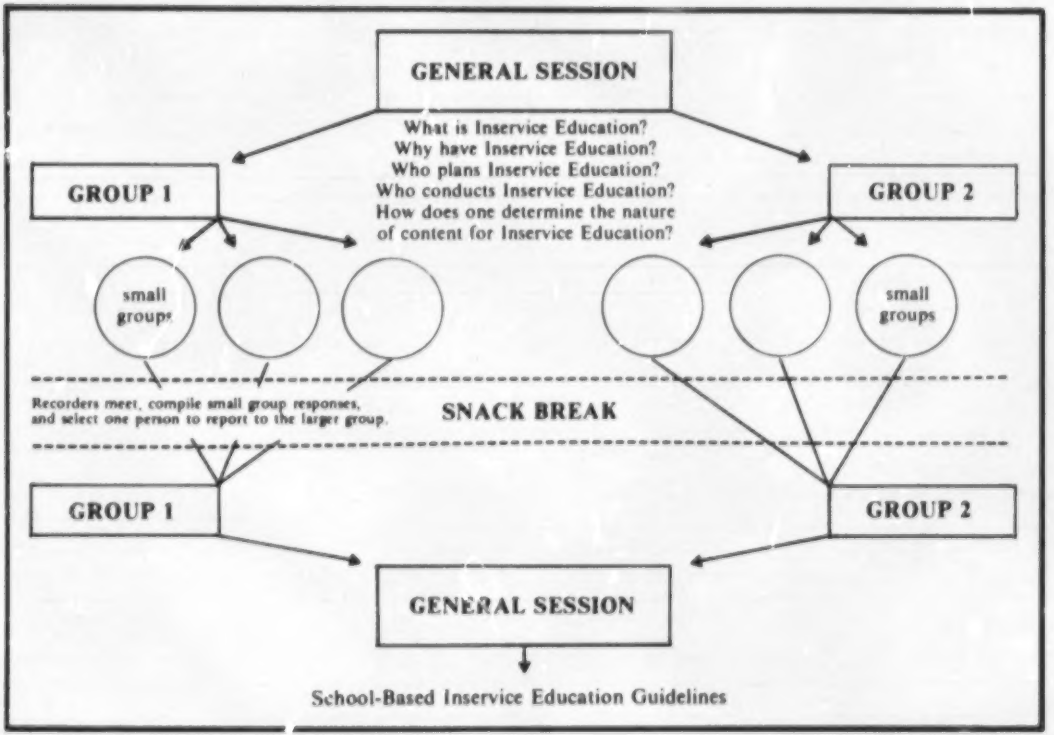
GENERAL SESSION
What is Inservice Education?
Why have Inservice Education?
Who plans Inservice Education?
Who conducts Inservice Education?
How does one determine the nature
of content for Inservice Education?
GROUP 1
GROUP 2
small
groups
small
groups
Recorders meet, compile small group responses,
and select one person to report to the larger group.
SNACK BREAK
GROUP 1
GROUP 2
GENERAL SESSION
School-Based Inservice Education Guidelines

Figure 1

The final activity of the day is to reconvene as a total faculty to share what the two large groups had discussed. Don't be surprised if both groups come up with just about the same ideas and perceptions about the way inservice is and the way it ought to be.

Format Two: The Assumptions Workshop

The second type of workshop follows the same procedure which was described for the Brainstorming workshop, *but* when they get together in their small groups, they use a list of eleven statements to guide their discussion. After reading each statement, teachers decide if they agree or disagree with it. If teachers disagree, they should replace the statement with an acceptable alternative. After teachers complete the individual exercise, they reconvene to share the results of their lists.

The list of statements is really a list of assumptions about desirable characteristics for a school-based inservice program. The list follows:

Inservice education at the local campus will be more effective--

	Agree	Disagree
1. *if* teachers have the major say in determining what their inservice program is to be.	____	____
2. *if* the professional staff uses a system for assessing their teaching needs.	____	____
3. *if* it is an integral part of instructional program improvement and takes place before and curriculum change begins.	____	____
4. *if* it is aimed at providing intrinsic satisfaction to all participants.	____	____
5. *if* all participants (teachers, student teachers, teacher aides, parents, administrators) have the opportunity to learn how to do their job better.	____	____

6. *if* administrators also have inservice education. ___ ___

7. *if* the inservice program offers more alternatives for professional development than just the traditional workshops or college courses. ___ ___

8. *if* the resources of nearby teacher education institutions are used in planning and implementing inservice programs. ___ ___

9. *if* the community understands and supports the need for inservice education. ___ ___

10. *if* there is extrinsic motivation (materials, stipends, university credit) for inservice training. ___ ___

11. *if* time for inservice-related activities is provided during the teachers' regular workday schedule. ___ ___

PHASE II

ASSESSING NEEDS

"What do *teachers* do?" In this question lies the heart of an inservice program for teachers. The foundation of the program must be grounded in a firm and *clear* "job description" for teachers. The major categories which we offer in this handbook are based on the efforts of Teacher Corps instructional staff members in the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin. The eight areas of teaching competency are:

1. Assessing and diagnosing
2. Planning instructions and learning activities
3. Conducting instruction
4. Management of the environment and resources
5. Evaluating instruction
6. Evaluating self
7. Working in the school-community context
8. Working with auxiliary personnel (teacher aides, volunteer parents, special education personnel)

The teaching act itself—what actually happens day-to-day in the classroom—encompasses the first six categories. The last two include areas in the working day of the teacher which are important and deserve attention for professional development.

"What do *students* do?" (or rather, what *should* students be able to do?) Herein lies the ultimate outcome of the inservice program—improving children's learning. To do this, it is important to have a clear idea of not only what skills teachers should have but also what skills students should have for each subject matter area in each grade level. If your school district has compiled a list of "essential student competencies," it can be a great help in focusing your program at specific needs in specific grade levels. If your district hasn't done this, you can write the Department of Elementary Education, Austin Independent School District, 6100 Guadalupe, Austin, Texas

78752, for ideas (since they have recently developed their own list of essential student competencies).

A very simple process for assessing teachers' needs for professional development is described next. There are three parts to it: (1) a general introduction, (2) the individual teachers' needs assessments, and (3) the grade level needs assessments.

Introduction. Teachers meet by grade level to conduct an individual needs assessment and a group needs assessment. The grade level chairperson should open with a brief introduction and review of the teacher competencies and the essential student competencies. Before teachers assess their individual needs, the leader should encourage teachers to discuss and share their questions with fellow teachers.

Individual assessment. With the workshop introduction in mind, each teacher should begin his/her individual assessment, referring to both the teacher and student competency lists. Individually, teachers should look for the major skill areas and subject areas in which they feel they need inservice training by referring first to the student competencies list for their grade level and then preparing a written list, indicating the needs they consider most important.

Grade level assessment. After completing the individual assessment, the teachers then begin discussing grade level of subject area needs. This will be the most difficult task. From all the individual needs—potentially a large number of different topics—the group must narrow the list down to the five or six *most important* needs. There will be much compromising on the part of the group.

The leader of the needs assessment activity can do his/her own recording since the only data being listed are lists of high priority subject areas, teacher competencies, and/or student competencies. A brief synopsis of the group's final decisions also will be prepared by the leader and later shared with the entire faculty.

The leader will have the important responsibility of keeping teachers on the task of the assignment, probing with the question: "Which teaching skills do we need to improve to help our students achieve each grade level competency?"

Some of the broader subjects for training areas may not be limited to a grade level, and thus training could be established to meet the needs of teachers at a number of grade levels.

During the grade level sessions, teachers also should suggest colleagues or other resource persons who can conduct training sessions. Many experienced and talented teachers have developed effective methods and techniques. Your own "local talent" should be shared.

Once each teacher's individual list of training needs has been discussed and the possible training areas have been suggested, the group should select three areas, either a grade level subject or a teacher competency, that need improvement. Within each area no more than five critical competencies or skills should be selected for emphasis in training. One competency may suffice. For example, fifth grade teachers choosing social studies may wish to focus on skills such as interpreting maps and globes, reading social studies materials, research skills, oral and written communication, and graph interpretation. Math skills for the fifth grader might include geometry, measurements, word problem-solving, and multiplication review. Teachers selecting assessing and diagnosing might focus on assessing a child's language dominance or identifying students with language disabilities. At the end of the session, the grade level chairperson should make sure the following questions have been considered and the items answered so that progress to Phase III is assured:

1. Which three subject areas are most important for teacher training at this grade level.
2. Within each subject area, which are the five most important student competencies which need improvement?
3. Which subject area will be the topic for the first inservice training session?
4. Are there any faculty members at this school who can be identified as resource persons in the areas selected?
5. What is the projected plan for the inservice program, including projected subjects, dates, places, session trainers,

materials, and cost?

The principal then invites each grade level recorder to share with the entire faculty a brief account of the grade levels' plans. The grade level chairpersons will meet with the principal to make technical arrangements for carrying out the plans. The lists of grade level plans which have been generated are now the school's goals and objectives.

PHASE III
TRAINING SESSIONS

Phase III of a school-based inservice education program is the actual training sessions. The principal or assistant principal can assist with the logistics of providing the training. More importantly however, he/she oversees the entire school inservice program, including being sure the assessed needs of the teachers are being met. Also, the principal probably will want at least one training area to address a school-wide concern as a means of involving special teachers and regular teachers in joint training. For example, teacher-student interaction, classroom discipline, classroom management, student diagnosis and assessment, or community involvement are topics important to all teachers.

The teachers at each grade level will need to meet to determine specific objectives for each training session. This list, along with the teacher and student competencies lists, must be provided to any session leaders and the principal. Most importantly, each grade level training group ought to be responsible for directing its own training experiences. This includes finding a consultant (perhaps, but not necessarily, from a local university), negotiating for meeting times with the principal, and purchasing materials, if needed.

Naturally, having money above the regular budget available for inservice training allows for more flexibility in carrying out an effective program. The funds may be from federal programs, a pilot project grant, or a special allocation through the instructional division of the school district. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that money is the decisive factor for a successful school-based inservice education program. Some universities have federally financed projects which are committed to teacher training without compensation. The regional education service centers and the state education agencies often have personnel available for teacher training purposes. Competent faculty members also can share their expertise. As can be seen, even though a school does not have a big budget for the inservice program, quality training still can be developed.

The following training areas and objectives demonstrate a sample grade level's inservice training program:

First and second grade: Teachers meet with a university professor for training and planning an improved math program covering the following objectives:

1. To identify methods for assessing children's math skills.
2. To conduct a math inventory of each child.
3. To learn methods for teaching students to work independently in math texts.
4. To acquire the skill of teaching children to conceptualize numbers.

Training Activities for Special Teachers

Training activities for special area teachers may require additional individualized attention because of the teachers' diverse needs. Special area teachers may elect to attend grade level planning meetings and/or grade level training sessions after they are established. All special area teachers, including art and music teachers, can supplement and reinforce skills and subjects taught in the regular classroom.

Grade level inservice sessions may not meet the needs of all special area teachers. A physical education teacher, for example, may find more handicapped children in physical education classes and may need inservice training to reach these students. Special therapists or resource teachers may have other special needs which require special training. Planning for these activities is the responsibility of these teachers and the principal.

Independent Inservice Training

Individual teachers may meet training needs by attending workshops in other schools or school districts or at a local university. The criterion for this training is that it improves the quality of education of students. Teachers attending off-campus training sessions should share the results with fellow teachers when appropriate. The librarian who attends a media use demonstration may wish to conduct a faculty workshop on media and equipment use in the classroom. A resource teacher

attending a university session explaining the law requiring the mainstreaming of handicapped children may plan a similar session at the school. Local policies on bilingual education could be brought into the school by a teacher who attended policy sessions of the school board, the legislature, of the school district. Also, teachers experiencing difficulty in certain areas may participate in individual sessions arranged by support personnel or the principal. All training sessions are planned with the principal to insure meeting the needs of the majority of teachers within the designated time frame.

Teacher Aides

Teacher aides should join grade levels or the entire faculty for training sessions applicable to their duties. Some sessions, however, may be established only for teacher aides. The following list provides an example of one school's topics for teacher aide inservice:

1. Influencing the language use of students.
2. Management and discipline of students.
3. Effective communication with students, teachers, and administrators.

Inservice for New Teachers

The principal and appropriate grade level chairperson should be certain any teachers new to the building since the beginning of school are familiar with the teacher and student competencies lists. These teachers join their grade level sessions and any other sessions for which they have a need.

New training areas may be initiated whenever the previously identified objectives have been met. Some areas may be covered in a single session, such as learning about a newly developed science program. Other areas may be studied over the semester or year.

PHASE IV

EVALUATING

To determine the success of the inservice program it is important to periodically examine the list of program assumptions or program characteristics agreed upon during the initial "readiness" workshop. This periodic checking will enable the steering committee to gauge the extent to which their inservice training program is adhering to the faculty's original conception of the program.

It is also important for the teachers and the principal to examine their list of assessed needs and try to answer the following questions:

—What am I able to do now that I was unable to do before taking this training?

—What are my students able to do now that they were unable to do before I took this training?

By scrutinizing each objective, teachers can review the training areas and decide whether they need to continue in the current area or move on to another area. Therefore, the process of establishing objectives, meeting these objectives, assessing progress, and establishing new objectives is ongoing and continuous. The process occurs throughout the years of building a school-based inservice program.

The ultimate goal of the program will be improved student achievement. But many factors will affect the achievement of students. Teacher skill improvement—the focus of the inservice program itself—is measured by self-evaluation and demonstration of increased competency, as seen by the principal and relevant support personnel.

IN CONCLUSION—

What are some of the major points for managing and operating an inservice program?

1. Someone *on site* must assume the leadership for coordinating the whole program. The principal or vice-principal could fill this role.

2. A training group will probably function better if an outside consultant can be secured to give the group some direction. It's probably too much to ask a regular classroom teacher to assume that responsibility, given everything else which conspires to fill every minute of their day.

3. Although it is sometimes difficult to negotiate, time during the school day for either individual, small group, or total group activities should be secured whenever possible. The use of teacher aides, student teachers, and volunteer parents, as well as teachers who team together, can facilitate this.

4. "Tired time" is pretty undesirable for meeting times. It's difficult to find much motivation after a full day of teaching.

5. Be creative. You don't have to stick with lecture-type workshops. Individual consultation, observation in other teachers' classrooms, individual projects, and group projects (such as building a science learning center) are all viable approaches to inservice education.

6. All members of the training group should have approximately the same goals for training.

7. It must be remembered that some teachers may have needs in classroom planning which make it especially difficult to plan their own inservice curriculum. Program leadership should help out here.

This discussion is to emphasize the importance of continuing, meaningful inservice training which has enough status in the eyes of administrators to be built into the school schedule. But these are old battles, ones which have been fought for many years. The influence of individual schools, adopting school-based inservice programs with the support of their school districts, can go a long way towards turning the tide of inservice training for teachers. We hope that this handbook has helped to further that end.